

# WARRIOR LEADER

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## Cadets take charge!

**The Squad Situational Training Exercise**, referred to as **Squad STX**, is a five-day, two-phase event that lasts a total of 104 hours. The first day, the squad training phase, is designed to train squad battle drills and collective tasks. The last four days, the **Squad STX** lane phase, are designed to evaluate leadership using tactical scenarios. Each cadet receives two formal evaluations of performance as a squad leader during this phase. Squad operations build on and reinforce all previous instruction. Cadets use their knowledge of land navigation, terrain analysis, weapons systems and all individual training previously presented. See how they do it on **Pages 4** and **5** inside this issue.

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are today's warriors**

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# The Dangers of Ephedra

NALC Public Affairs

Drawn in by claims of losing weight, increased endurance and bigger muscles, many Americans are now buying and using herbal supplements in record numbers. Estimates are that a third of the population now consumes some form of herbal supplement, even though few of them have been shown to be effective. The worst part is that soldiers often are a prime consumer, though many have no idea what those supplements contain.

Ephedra has recently become an important topic with many senior leaders as at least twenty active-duty personnel have died while taking herbal supplements containing this ingredient. About 1,000 other injuries have been also reported, prompting President Bush to order a government investigation into its safety. Use of ephedra and similar supplements is a matter of great concern to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (CHPPM), the Army Safety Center, TRADOC and our sister services.


Ephedra, better known as ma huang, is found in several plant species. The active ingredient of ma huang is ephedrine, first isolated in the late 1800s. Ephedrine is an alkaloid with properties that make it useful as a decongestant and stimulant. However, these alkaloids should never be considered innocuous or safe just because they occur “naturally.” Central nervous system stimulation and the feeling of euphoria or increased energy can lead to abuse and a false sense of wellness.

Products containing ephedra should be used short-term only. The potential for abuse is high, and ephedrine-containing products are considered addictive. Since the FDA does not regulate herbal supplements, there are no laws requiring that they be safe or effective, or even that dosage labels be correct.

This is an important concern for Cadet Command, not only to keep at-risk potential users from making bad personal decisions, but also to teach future leaders about some of the issues that they will have to wrestle when they are in charge. This can really hit home — a cadet who was hospitalized in

serious condition at Madigan this year admitted that he had consumed large amounts of ephedrine prior to arriving at NALC.

Two common products that contain ephedra are Metabolife 356 and Ripped Fuel, both of which also contain caffeine (sometimes listed as guarana or green tea). The caffeine enhances the effects of ephedra, increasing the frequency and severity of adverse effects. Ephedra can potentially interact with many drugs, but especially with caffeine. It also can interact with diseases such as diabetes.

People who take ephedra can experience dizziness, headache, heart palpitations, high blood pressure, psychosis, chest tightness, cardiac arrest and death. Other side effects of ephedra include insomnia, anxiety, irritability and nervousness, as well as a dangerously fast heartbeat and a drastic increase in blood pressure. These last two effects, along with strenuous exercise, are suspected to have contributed to the soldier deaths, resulting in a heart attack, stroke or seizures. 

## Connection is the key to long-lasting success

By Chap. (Lt. Col.) Thomas Joseph  
Dep. Camp Chaplain

By far the tallest living things found on Earth are the California redwood trees. Some stand taller than a 35-story building. Like all trees, redwoods continue to grow as long as they are alive. Thus, the longer a tree lives, the taller and wider it becomes.

The most famous redwood tree in the world is General Sherman. Located in Sequoia National Park in California, it is almost as tall as a 30-story building, and it has been there for about 4,000 years. To support its height, its immense trunk is so large that 17 men stretching out their arms could just about reach around it. This single tree contains enough wood to construct 100 homes.

The redwood tree has few enemies. Scientists have researched the redwoods carefully and have not found even one that has died of old age, sickness or insect attack. Except for those cut down for timber, redwoods live on.

Their thick bark protects them against fire, insects and disease. How clearly this should reflect the life of a believer. Believers likewise should have a thick bark (shield of faith) to protect them against the enemy’s attacks.


Another amazing aspect of the redwoods is their ability to grow in semi-lighted areas, which makes it possible for them to grow to great heights. Believers who have gone through the darkness of life’s challenges and emerged victoriously can be pillars of strength — great encouragers and counselors — because they not only have the power of the Holy Spirit, but empathy and understanding.


There is one incredible aspect of the redwoods’ makeup, which is powerful lesson for believers. It seems there is only one characteristic of redwoods that can lead to their demise: their shallow root system. The roots of these towering giants of several hundred feet go down only about five to ten feet. When I first heard this, I didn’t believe it. But I found out it’s true. Can you imagine building a 35-story building with five to ten feet below the surface? Did God make a mistake? Apparently not, because many of them have been standing for thousands of years. Well, maybe there isn’t anything that can knock them down, but California has major windstorms and earthquakes, which could bring them down in a second.

What is the secret to their longevity? God has designed within them a unique feature, which provides a lesson for every believer. They grow in groups with their roots linked together. When the winds blow or the earthquakes, the trees stand strong. Those that begin growing in isolation don’t survive very long. Likewise young or weak believers, though they have a lot of zeal, become easy targets for the enemy. The winds of adversity can destroy them.

Since the redwoods network together, their root systems can spread all over an entire acre of land. In a grove of redwoods, the trees’ roots interlock with one another, and the resulting strength enables them to withstand major attacks of nature.

This should encourage each of us to stay connected with our roots. We need one another for encouragement and protection. I am convinced that successful people know how to network; I encourage all soldiers in the Army

— especially you ROTC cadets — to do the same. One of the comments I often hear from cadets regarding the common experience at the NALC is that cadets from various backgrounds and various places work well together. This is very crucial if you are a believer. You need other believers to help you; their prayers and support are crucial for survival in this highly stressful environment. An organization I would whole-heartedly recommend is Officers’ Christian Fellowship. You will find them at almost all military posts and bases. Connect with them and grow in your spiritual life. There are also chaplains of all major faith groups in the military, and they can be of great assistance to you. 



**Mr. Whiskers**  
**Camp cadre at the One Rope Bridge couldn’t figure out why the ropes were getting frayed so fast until our photographer caught the culprit in the act. This Western Gray Squirrel, who looks like he needs a shave, has a mouthful of hemp ready to make a cozy nest in a nearby tree.**  
— PAO.

Al Zdarsky

# Today's cadets are tomorrow's heroes

## Real-world missions underscore importance of NALC training

By 2nd Lt. Christy Stanley

Serving as a leader in today's Army has taken many young officers to locations around the world, holding more responsibilities than they ever imagined. Whether serving within the Continental United States, or deployed at an overseas post, junior officers who commissioned as recently as December have learned the responsibility of leadership begins upon arrival at his or her first duty assignment.

Many Cadets have been affected by the recent U.S. Army missions in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as many of the less publicized missions around the world. Cadet Sara Foleen of Washington State University, whose father is currently deployed in Iraq, is at NALC in 2nd Regiment. Cadet Jason Schacter of James Madison University and also of 2nd Regiment has a brother serving in Iraq as well. Both cadets have first-hand experience when it comes to having a family member deploy, but it is quite possible they too could find themselves overseas in a year or two.

In recent months, more than

300,000 troops have deployed to the Persian Gulf region in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Among them

are many junior officers who attended National Advanced Leadership Camp as recently as last summer. Many of today's cadets know lieutenants who graduated in the last few years who are now playing an integral part in the action overseas.

Lieutenants in Iraq and the surrounding areas have more to worry about than many would imagine. Not only are they accountable for themselves, but often millions of dollars worth of equipment and, most importantly, the lives of the soldiers in their units. When something goes wrong, the soldiers will look to the officers for guidance.

As 1st Lt. Jessica Soderbeck, a graduate of Mount Holyoke College in Hadley, Massachusetts, has come to realize, her job becomes more serious and more important every day. As a platoon leader for a petroleum platoon


with the 8th Ordnance Battalion, based at Fort Lewis, Wash., she worked to

ensure her unit was prepared for future missions and now that preparedness is being put to the test in Iraq. Overseas duty can be difficult for many junior leaders, after being on active duty for as little as six months, fresh out of college and having just completed their Officer Basic Course, many new lieutenants will find the weight of responsibility bearing

down from the moment they arrive at their first unit. As Soderbeck points out, the dangers are always present.

"My platoon is split into three separate locations," she said, "and I spend my time floating between the sites. It is dangerous on the roads, though. I'm trying to get helicopter rides out there. We landed in Kuwait, and then waited forever for all my equipment to arrive from nine separate ships. That was a headache. Thank goodness I wasn't the Unit Movement

Officer." Even with the ever-present danger, the focus stays on the mission, partially because of its importance, and partially to keep the minds of all involved off of the inherent risks of the daily operations.

The priorities become more evident as Soderbeck continues; "Got ambushed yesterday. Scary stuff. (They) got our rear vehicle with a shaped charge and then proceed to hit us with small arms fire. We kicked ass, though. Disabled three vehicles, returned fire, and got the hell out of Dodge. No one was killed, but 1st Sgt. got shrapnel in his shin. He is okay and will return to duty in a couple days. Hoo-ah!" Although the lieutenant may make light of the situation the seriousness of the continued conflict can still be seen, even now that the main push has ended. With over 30 of the 238 confirmed coalition deaths being junior officers, it really hits home that today's cadets will be tomorrow's junior officers and some day soon they may have to make the tough decisions and use the skills that they are honing at NALC as well as their host institutions. 



1st Lt. Jessica Soderbeck

Mike Salisbury

# Just one school of 272: Gonzaga grads serve around the globe

By Lt. Col. Alan Westfield  
Gonzaga University

Every school in the 272 colleges with Army ROTC programs has the potential of seeing their graduates serve in a combat zone. Schools like Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash., are where these leaders are recruited and trained and they have contributed their fair share of heroes to the mission.

2nd Lt. Justin Horgan graduated from Gonzaga in May 2002. After completing the Signal Corps Officer Basic Course in January of 2003, he was welcomed by his new chain of command at Fort Hood, Texas, taken directly to the Central Issue Facility to draw his gear and, in the same day, introduced to his new platoon as they loaded their equipment for shipment to the Middle East. He and his fiancée, Kristan, (GU Class of May, 2003), moved up their wedding date from June to late January and were married in Texas.

Since deployment in April, Justin has been in several places in Iraq to include Baghdad, Baqubah, and Tikrit.

"I'm still at the Tikrit palace," Horgan wrote, "but will only be here through the week and then I'm back to my platoon at Baqubah. Staying at the palace is nice. I'm pulling twelve hour shifts so I don't get to do much walking around."

His platoon has provided signal support to the 4th ID with their four SENS in support of the brigades and as part of the SYSCON control element for the entire division communications network.

Justin's mother sent him an air conditioner she bought new for \$80, then paid another \$200 in postage to send it from Mountain Home, Idaho to Iraq in the mail. It's now being used by Justin and his platoon in their six-sided tent.

As a proficient signaller, he has had access to email, kept his family and school informed and even sent



1st Lt. Tyler Gence, medical platoon leader of Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, Task Force 2-63 Armor Battalion, passes out calcium tablets to some of the 137 residents who were given medical, dental and optometry care by U.S. soldiers at the Medical Civilian Assistance Program mission in the Kosovar village of Devaje June 28.

Courtesy of Gonzaga Army ROTC

some pictures. And he tries to reassure them about his safety.

"I just go day to day until they

finally send us home," said Horgan. "Here are some pictures. The explo-

See "Gonzaga," Page 6

# Ruck up!

## Learning leadership tricks at Squad STX



Squad leader, Cadet H. Graham Cull of the University of Houston, signals his squad to halt.

### Story and photos by 2nd Lt. Tamara Gonzales

**The Squad Situational Training Exercise (Squad STX)** begins on each regiment's Day-19 at the 2003 National Advanced Leadership Camp. According to Lt. Col. Mark Ayers, the Squad STX committee chief, this is the first leadership evaluation in a tactical environment and one-third of the NALC leadership evaluations are conducted at there. Cadets have been training for this event since the beginning of their ROTC experience, and as Ayers puts it, "This is where cadets apply skills learned from both camp and campus. The number-one skill you learn from the university is problem solving, which is applied at the lanes." Lanes are individual task sets and situations.

Following an 8-km road march to the Squad STX committee, cadets establish their bivouac site and settle in for the night. The next morning, they attend STX classes and participate in one cadre-led lane and two cadre-assisted lanes. The purpose of these three lanes is for cadets to learn what is expected of them in Squad STX leadership roles. The lanes consist of reconnaissance, movement to contact, ambush, deliberate attack and bunker missions.

**Everyone has his or her favorite** and not-so-favorite lane. Cadet Lenwood Purce of Alabama A & M University and Cadet Amy Pyne of Gonzaga University both liked the ambush lane. Purce liked it because, "I had an opportunity to lead the lane and learn from the experience." He added, "I learned the tactics as they were highlighted and executed."

Pyne's enjoyment was because "It's really fun to include detailed planning and, of course, the anticipation." Neither Purce nor Pyne liked the reconnaissance lane. Purce explained, "The

reconnaissance lane was boring," but offered the suggestion of more interaction in the original rally point (ORP) and to know what they (the recon team) were doing." Pyne said her recon was made more interesting only because they were attacked at the ORP.

There were contradicting opinions on the bunker lanes and movement-to-contact lanes. Cadet Ian Dietz of Georgetown University liked that lane because it was the most straightforward, whereas Cadet Robert Vaicels of St. John's University disliked it.

"**The movement to contact lane** is easiest to plan yet most difficult to execute," he said, "because you don't know where the fire is coming from." Dietz was not in favor of the bunker lane because "There is not much variety, it was the most static and most predictable." However, Vaicels had fun with the bunker lane because "There is a good deal of strategic planning and the most opportunity to use ITT techniques." The lanes vary depending on the mission and cadets learn many lessons from their Squad STX experience.

Cadet evaluation lanes are conducted on final four days with six lanes performed on STX days two and four. Each lane is approximately two hours long.

"Cadets understand the operations order," said Ayers, "but they need to take other elements into consideration. They need to understand the meaning and purpose of the other elements and how their element fits into the platoon mission," such as units to the left and right. During the first 15 minutes the squad leader establishes security and receives the mission from the tactical evaluator (TAC). The next 30 minutes are used for assembly area (AA) troop leading procedures

to include the squad leader briefing the operations order and squad rehearsals. Tactical evaluator, Sgt. 1st Class Kenji Skinner of Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, offers several pieces of advice to better prepare cadets for Squad STX. He recommends cadets should study Chapters 2 and 3 in FM 7-8, study the TACSOP and be proficient in land navigation.

**Once the squad departs** the AA, it has 45 minutes to conduct the lane. Skinner said "An outstanding cadet with a well-coordinated unit can get through a lane faster." After movement to the site, the squad performs actions on the objective, establishes security, conducts enemy prisoner of war (EPW) searches, provides medical aid to casualties and calls in the appropriate reports to higher headquarters. Once the mission is "indexed" (completed), cadets gather together with the tactical evaluator to review lessons learned from the mission via the After Action Review (AAR). Following AAR, the squad leader receives their evaluation from the TAC officer.

Lessons vary, from how to being better pre-



Cadet Jim Nemeck of Gannon University rucks up, donning his rucksack full of field equipment.

pare for the field, to lessons about working together as a squad. Lessons on field preparation include bringing bug spray and being technically and tactically proficient. Cadet Staci Rutledge of Wheaton College Illinois advised, "Make sure you know your operations order format, call for fire and 9-line Medevac." Both teamwork and motivation also play significant roles in mission accomplishment. Cadet Seth Frank of University of Illinois said, "Know what your priorities are on an individual basis to accomplish the overall mission as a team." He added, "Everybody did what they had to do to accomplish the mission and it showed in our evaluations."


**STX is also about** being technically and tactically proficient. Cadet Scott De Caro described the importance of motivation, "Always stay motivated, the TACs appreciate it and it will create an even better mission. Motivation made it the most fun." Several cadets said they learned more



Cadet Lenwood Purce, of Alabama A & M University, and Cadet Amy Pyne, of Gonzaga University, assist casualty Cadet Seth Reimers, of Northwest Missouri State University.

about their squad, squad members and themselves. Rutledge said, “STX pushed me, helped me realize what I could do and I got to know my squad on a more personal level.” Another way of learning lessons, besides personal experience, is through cadets’ evaluations.

**While cadets from all over** the nation come to NALC and go through Squad STX, so do the TACs. There are approximately 96 lane evaluators divided into two teams, Grizzly and Wolverine, who write over 10,000 green (evaluation) cards. Since there are so many TACs, all with different backgrounds, all TACs are required to attend the TAC staff school. Previous lane leaders and professors of military science manage the school, providing instruction via lectures and evaluation practical exercises. Skinner said, “The purpose of these classes is so that all evaluators are calibrated and all evaluations are performed in a uniform manner.” That ensures everyone knows their job.

**Besides the TACs,** there is also a team officer in charge (OIC), a team non-commissioned officer in charge (NCOIC), an operations officer and two company officers. The two company officers are in charge of quality control while the operations officer manages the evaluation matrix and the green cards. Other support personnel include the opposing forces (OPFOR), truck drivers and medics. The OPFOR consists of 128 soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 222 Field Artillery from the Utah National Guard. The truck drivers transport cadets and “water buffalos” to the mandatory lanes while the 801st medics provide required medical treatment. Squad STX requires logistical support from all types of personnel and is a learning experience for both cadets and TACs. So stay motivated, be technically and tactically proficient and have fun! **Ready, ruck up!** 



Alpha team leader, Cadet Carlo Nardone of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, moves stealthily as he leads his team through the woods.



Cadet L. Shane Blankenship, of Western Kentucky University, searches EPW Spec. Aaron Sorenson of 2-222 FA, while Cadet Randall Linnemann, of University of Dayton, guards the EPW.



Cadets gather together at the AAR site to learn lessons from the mission.

# Working the angles at Land Navigation

By 2nd Lt. Samantha Schoden

Throughout camp cadets face many challenges. One particularly daunting task for cadets is the completion of written land navigation and the day and night courses. Prior to walking the course the cadets must complete a written assessment of their navigation skills. This of course is pertaining to the 20 question diagnostic exam that the cadets will do on their second day of camp. This exam is significant because it mentally prepares the cadets and helps to build their confidence. The cadets do an un-recorded test to identify their weaknesses. If the cadet is struggling then his or her fellow cadets will help coach them. Cadets then take a recorded exam where they are well prepared having just taken a practice. The written test is worth 20 points where day and night land navigation are worth 50 each.

On their 10th day of camp the cadets negotiate through the practical test consisting of a two-day exercise. Lieutenant Miles Davis, instructor, said that the main objectives for the land navigation training are refresher training and assessment. Day one consist of the cadets rotating through eight different refresher courses such as Lensatic compass, application of a protractor and basic



Like several other NALC events, the Land Navigation site includes an overnight bivouac in a temporary "tent city" populated by a cadet regiment.


map knowledge. This ensures that if the cadets have difficulty, the instructors can trouble shoot before the cadets go out on to the course. Once cadets gain a sense of trust towards their equipment they will then traverse through night navigation. They must find 5 points within a three-and-one-half hour radius. As a convenience for the cadets the points are marked with red chemical lights. A cadet will lose 5 points for every missed point. If a cadet is 10 minutes late during the night navigation then they will lose 1 point. A cadet will receive a go with a minimum of 35 points.



Finding an azimuth and key terrain features is a part of map reading.

The next morning the cadets are given five hours to find 8 points. During day navigation, as with the night, a cadet can pass with 35 points. Here too, they will lose 5 points for every missed point. A difference between night and day is that

during the day the cadets are penalized 1 point for every 5 minutes they are late. If a cadet is not able to pass the course there is an allotted day for them to come back and attempt it again. This is provided to reaffirm cadet's confidence and to show encouragement towards their success in meeting the camp's standards.

To ensure that the course is accurate the cadre, consisting of mostly 2nd lieutenants, performs a routine police call every morning that they are on duty. The cadre also re-verifies all 64 points on the course. Lieutenant Davis knows that the course needs to stay in decent shape because, "success on this difficult land navigation course will instill confidence in the cadets." Land navigation is a beginning foundation, which if the skills are honed, will be a benefit for later use during the remainder of NALC. 



At the end of the course, a cadet anxiously awaits the TAC's evaluation.

## "Gonzaga," from Page 3

sion is the Engineers blowing up ammo caches. So don't worry, it wasn't aimed at us. The water tower isn't conventional Signal SOP but we're at war so we do what we have to."

But Iraq isn't the only place where Gonzaga grads are stationed forward. 1st Lt. Tyler Gence is from Gonzaga's Class of 2001. He served in Kosovo for 11 months as the Medical Platoon Leader for HHD, Task Force 2-63 Armor at Camp Bondsteel, providing medical, dental, and optometry care for Kosovar citizens as part of the Medical Civilian Assistance Program.

Tyler's rotation in Kosovo was recently completed and he returned to Vilseck, Germany where he and his classmate, 1st Lt. Josh Kaser, serve in the same unit.

Tyler's sister, Jennifer, is also a GU graduate who was commissioned as a lieutenant in 1998. They



2nd Lt. Justin Horgan sent this photo of an Iraqi water tower converted into a multiple signal antenna tower.

are from Wenatchee, Wash.


These are people who decided to serve the country that gave so much to them. Some even bypassed personal gain and put service first. 2nd Lt. Kenji Price, now serving in Iraq, too, let the dream of most athletes pass him by. A USA Today High School All-American Honorable Mention in basketball at Mililani High in Hawaii, he turned down several full-ride athletic scholarships to attend Gonzaga and have a chance to be a ROTC leader. Four years later - as he walked across the stage to receive his commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army and, the following day, to receive his Gonzaga diploma in criminal justice - Price is sure that he made the correct choice, to which he credits advice from his father.

"He put it all in perspective for me," Price said. "He made me understand that there is life beyond basketball. I could succeed and play

a couple of years at a four-year school, but if I really wanted to do well in life, I should focus on school. He let me know what is important in life. That was instrumental."

Price earned the honor as top cadet among 400 of his peers in the National Advanced Leadership Camp last summer at Fort Lewis, Wash., for leadership, physical fitness and military skills.

"This is a business based on love," Price said. "Love for your soldiers and love for what you're doing."

Gonzaga is just one school, but these young officers, along with others like Jon Evans, James Person, Pat Henrichs, Ryan Lavoie, Megan Raleigh, Ginger Hammerquist and more, all Gonzaga graduates, are busy guarding freedom's frontiers every day. Yesterday's cadets are today's heroes and today's cadets will step into their boots all too soon. 



Sergeant 1st Class Gary Ogilvie

# Duty, Honor, Country

By 2nd Lt. Tamara Gonzales


The 2003 National Advanced Leadership Camp's Salute Battery renders honors with a stirring, 75 mm howitzer cannonade.

Duty, honor and country are more than just words, they are what bind us together as a military defending our country's freedom. The "Cannonade," which is fired at all National Advanced Leadership Camp (NALC) regimental activation ceremonies and cadet graduations, accentuates these traits. Lt. Col. Roderick Hosler, Phase I Ceremonies OIC, says the significance of the Cannonade is "to highlight the importance of duty, honor and country."

Of course, none of this would be possible without the reservists who fire the cannons or without the cannons themselves. Every two weeks, a new team of reservists rotates into NALC to demonstrate pride in their country through the Salute Battery. The first day consists of training pertaining to cannon

assembly, disassembly, cleaning and safety. They then spend the rest of the time firing the Cannonade at graduations and regimental activation ceremonies. There are seven members in the salute battery, one NCOIC, three gunners and three loaders. According to Master Sgt. Dennis Todd, NALC Training NCOIC, the loaders have the most difficult job.

Howitzer, Pack, 75mm M1A1 cannons, which

were designed after World War I, are utilized to fire the 75mm ceremonial rounds. Each of the cannons has their given name on it, Duty, Honor and Country. The Duty cannon is the base cannon, which is the position of honor. According to Hosler the ceremony "Goes back to firing the Cannonade for special events and dignitaries." The tradition lives on at NALC. 

## 2nd Louie

By Bob Rosenburgh

### Much more than words

The firing of the cadet cannonade reminds us of the three important elements of the Soldier's Creed: Duty, Honor and Country.

**Duty** - Obedience and disciplined performance despite difficulty or danger. Duty requires self-responsibility and selfless devotion.

**Honor** - Encompassing integrity and dedication. Honor is the thread, which holds together the fabric of our Army.

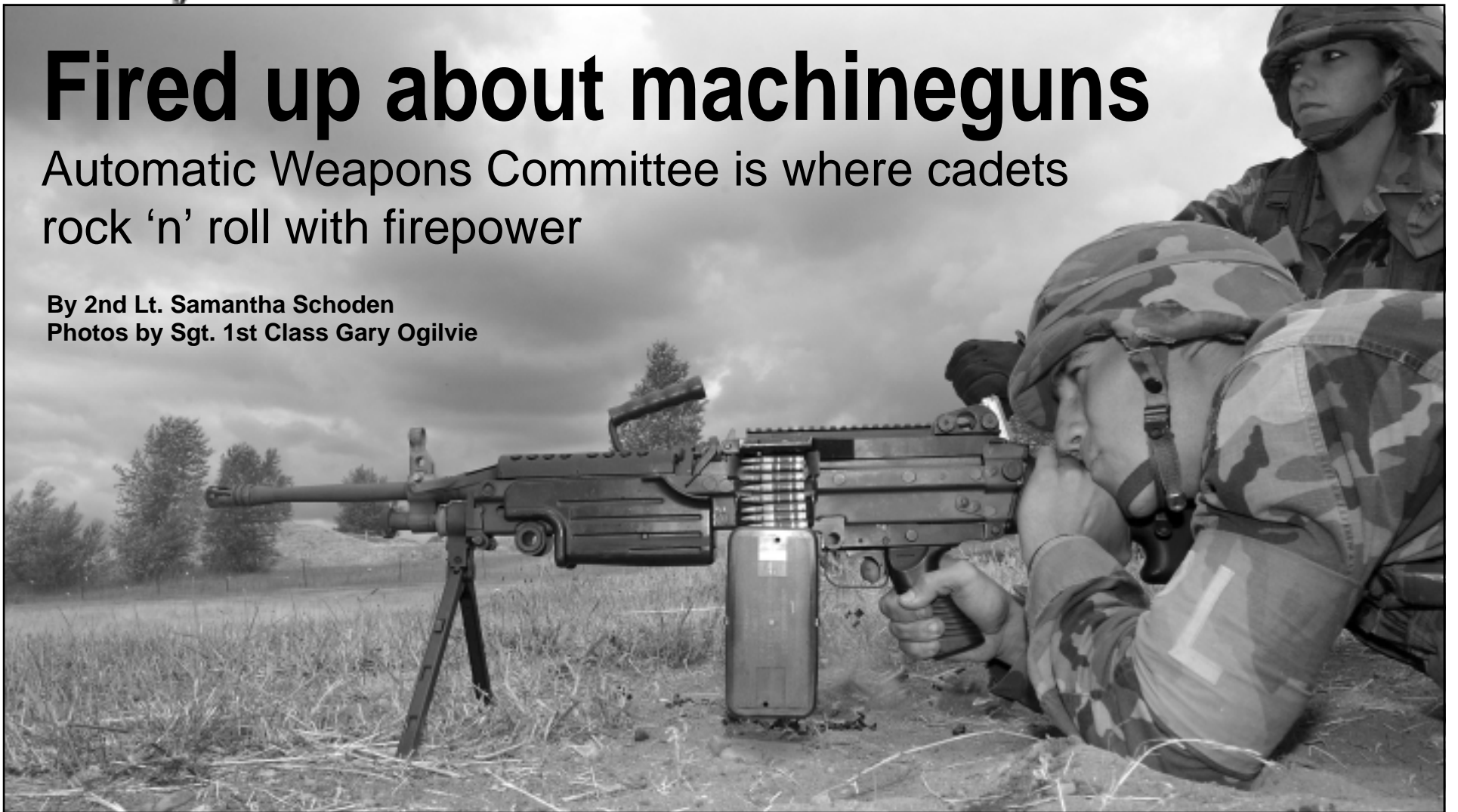
**Country** - For which men and women have given their lives. Our country shines as a light of freedom and dignity to the world.



# Fired up about machineguns

## Automatic Weapons Committee is where cadets rock ‘n’ roll with firepower

By 2nd Lt. Samantha Schoden  
Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Gary Ogilvie



With an extremely high rate of fire and a substantial-sized magazine of belted ammunition, the M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW) is a one-man war.



Getting there is half the fun, as these cadets learn at the Mad Dog Assault Course.

Automatic Weapons is a truly exciting day for cadets. There are few times an Army cadet can reflect back and say, “I am doing things that none of my non-military friends will have the chance to experience.”

Automatic Weapons is definitely that kind of event. Here, the cadets learn about the M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW) and M-60 Machinegun, both used at Platoon STX.

And the training for 2003 NALC has changed a little.

“The difference this year is that we take the entire regiment through in a day,” said Master Sgt. Sidney Hunte, Range NCOIC. “Alpha Co. starts here while Bravo Co. goes to Fire Support and then they switch. We also tried to get the M-240B (Light Machinegun), but the support unit was busy considering what’s happening in the rest of the world.”

assault and defensive fires


The SAW provides the basic firepower of a fire team and is individually portable. The gunner has the option of using 30-round M-16 magazines or linked ammunition from pre-loaded 200-round plastic magazines.

The cadets learn the operations of this weapon through different stations after they have seen a demonstration of the capabilities of the several weapons. One of the stations is the Live Fire. There, cadets actually fire the SAW. Two

“Firing the weapons was great!”

The cadets learn assembly/disassembly of the SAW and there is a competition between the cadets to see who can do it the fastest. Each competes for the gold rock, meaning he or she was the fastest. This is a great team-building event and Cadet Justin Gomez, University of Colorado, agreed when he said, “The camaraderie is the best part about being here.”

A follow-on station is the Range Card area where cadets learn to place the M-60 in a defensive position and set up fields of fire.

The most difficult event is the “Mad Dog” assault course. The cadets are broken down in three-man buddy teams. When a horn blast is sounded the cadets must crawl under barbed wire and scale a wall. Yellow smoke is “popped” to confuse the cadets as they are attempting this. Once they make it successfully over the wall, they encounter a deep ditch which they must cross in order to set up their firing position, all the while carrying a M-60, extra barrel, tripod and M-16s. The Mad Dog is part of the Leader’s Stake scoring. The fastest crew is recognized at the end, along with the best overall platoon. Cadet Aaron Holt, North Georgia College & State University, said, “It’s great being here because 1st Platoon is here.” He felt that Automatic Weapons is a truly fulfilling event for the cadets. 



**Cadet Charlene Lombardi, of University of Tennessee–Knoxville, pulls back the charging handle on a SAW she has just assembled.**

The M-60 is a “crew served” weapon. This means it takes more than one soldier to operate – one as the gunner and the other the assistant, providing covering and suppressive fires in the

cadets each both fire 50 rounds in 10 round bursts from a foxhole, then they fire 50 more rounds apiece from the prone position. Cadet Catherine Powell from the University of West Florida said,